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AUTHOR Desiderio, John
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ABSTRACT

Techniques are presented for reaching the community college evening student with information about college events. Because of the unique characteristics of evening students, traditional publicity methods often do not work. Some methods which can be effective are: (1) posting a large signboard with good illumination at the entrance to the college; (2) placing signboards along walkways or in the foyer of each building; (3) leaving promotional material in classrooms or with evening instructors; (4) providing information in lounges, hallways, or near vending machines where students typically gather during breaks; (5) placing flyers on windshields and distributing bumper stickers; and (6) presenting promotional videotapes in lounges. Another publicity method is promotional programing in which students are presented with a teaser or preview of an entertainment event. These teasers can be held during class breaks on the night of the event and are designed to encourage students to remain on campus after class for the event itself. The point to remember when publicizing events for evening students is that the publicity must be taken to them. (DC)

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Publicity Techniques

The 1979 Convention of the National Entertainment and Campus Activities Association included several sessions which focused on commuter students. The following summaries are reprinted by courtesy of the presenters.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR THE EVENING STUDENT

John Desiderio,
Assistant Director of Student Activities at Lorain County Community College

Programming for the evening student at the community college has been a continuous dilemma facing programmers each year. While the evening student population comprises a significant faction of the total community college population, most programs occur during the evening hours when these students are attending class. Therefore, programmers must be sensitive to the needs and characteristics of the evening student and must employ new publicity techniques and "promotional programming devices" designed to facilitate these students.

As one examines the nature of the evening student, some general characteristics emerge:

1. usually a working person, holding a full-time job
2. a part-time student
3. attends class from approximately 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
4. usually arrives at the college, goes directly to class and then returns to his car to go home
5. typically an older student than those students attending full-time and during the day

With these characteristics in mind I will address two basic questions:

1. How can we better publicize events which will encourage the evening student to stay on campus?
2. What promotional programming techniques can be employed to better facilitate the evening student and be used to better publicize evening events.

Publicity

Since evening students typically arrive on campus, attend classes and then depart for home, the normal avenues of traffic within the college buildings are not always the best facilities to advertise upcoming events. For example, the college union or college center which facilitates a large proportion of the student population during the day, may not serve such a purpose to the evening student since most community college unions and centers provide no or a minimal percentage of classroom facilities. Thus, the evening student may not enter that building in the evening and publicity techniques displayed in such a center may not be reaching the evening student; so alternative methods must be devised.

The first approach to effective publicity for the evening student is to examine his schedule. In most cases he will:

1. enter onto the college campus
2. walk to his respective class
3. attend class
4. probably have a class break
5. have some time between classes
6. finish class, return to his car and exit the campus

Each one of the characteristics can be effectively addressed by certain publicity techniques. These are:

1. A large sign board at the entrances to the college; good lighting and a large size. These have typically been seen at the entrances to many colleges and high schools and can be easily read by incoming cars.

2. Sign boards along walkways can be installed and lighted and-or sign boards can be placed in the entrance foyers in each building. Upcoming events can be posted here.

3. Promotional material can be left in the classrooms or can be distributed by evening class instructors. One effective means of such material is the printing of tickets or small cards which can easily be distributed to and pocketed by the evening student. Another technique of promotion which can be used in the classroom is to attach posters or flyers to classroom bulletin boards.

4. The class break and the time alloted between classes affords the programmer the most significant avenue for effective publicity. Students will typically congregate in lounges, hallways and near vending machines. It is these facilities which provide the utmost exposure for publicity material. Some effective promotional techniques are:

   a. posters and flyers in and around these areas

   b. table tents or pyramids with promotional ads

   c. printed ashtrays highlighting upcoming events

   d. tickets or small cards left on lounge tables

   e. programming board students to distribute promotional material at designated times. Free refreshments (i.e.: coffee) may be provided at this time to draw more students to these areas.

5. As the student leaves campus, flyers can be placed on windshields. Bumper stickers can be printed and distributed (often times, entertainers will provide such promotional material).

6. TV's can be set up in the lounges in order to present video tapes of daytime programs, student group information and

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Activities group focuses on commuters

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publicizing upcoming events. By use of a character generator printed messages can be run across the screen during TV programs with messages concerning upcoming events.

There are many other effective means of reaching the evening student audience and you are only limited by your creativity and ingenuity. For example, use the college newspaper and outside media effectively by informing them of all upcoming events and place ads when appropriate. Further more, encourage the college newspaper to install pick-up boxes in the lounges which receive the largest portion of evening student traffic. Provide monthly activities calendars for each lounge, foyer and classroom. Similarly, a separate evening students calendar and-or information sheet may be distributed to the evening students.

The point to remember in publicizing events to evening students is that you must take the publicity to them—programmers cannot expect the student to come to the publicity. Study the characteristics of the evening student and his schedule and promote events accordingly.

Promotional Programming

The term "promotional programming" I will coin to mean and describe programs which are designed to expose the entertainers to the student population in a program preview. These types of programs are often called "previews" or "teasers" and are designed to entice the student to return to the campus for the scheduled main event. Many colleges are already presenting such programs but are often times conducted during the noon hour and are typically conducted in the college union or college center. While such programs are quite effective in reaching the day-time students, the facility and time in which they are presented does not effectively reach the evening student. However, the technique is a good one and a little shifting in time and facility may prove quite productive. At Lorain County Community College we have modified this concept:

1. by speaking with entertainers and at a nominal fee, teasers are presented for our eveing student.

2. mindful of the evening student's schedule, artists (especially coffeehouse performers) are contracted to perform teasers in between class periods during the evening hours.

3. These teasers are provided in two building lounges at approximately 7:15 p.m. and 8:15 p.m., alternating lounges with the two times.

4. a memo is sent to evening faculty informing them of our scheduled teasers and requesting that, if at all possible, the classes which end at 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. could be dismissed at 7:15 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. and those beginning at 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. be delayed 15 minutes. These memos sent out one week proir to the event are purely an informational and promotional device as well as only a request.

5. the major show does not begin until 9:00 p.m., allowing both student and artist time to arrive at the program site and set up.

6. each teaser lasts a half hour and does serve to encourage the evening students to attend the major show.

7. similarly, those who are unable to attend the evening show are entertained by the artist and the teasers serve as a staging area for our Program Board to announce upcoming events.

This is the type of promotional programming which can not only provide entertainment for the tightly scheduled evening student but that can also expose him to the featured artist and entice him to remain on campus for the ensuing event. Consequently, those who do choose to attend the main event held in the college center are thus exposed to future promotional material presented in that facility which he or she might not have witnessed, not having visited this particular building. Likewise, our Basement Activities Room, located in the College Center is being opened during the evening hours (this was not previously done) in order to provide recreational activities for the evening to the traditional avenues of promotion. (i.e., banners, posters, information desk, etc.)

Finally, programmers must attempt to personalize their publicity by getting students to actively participate in promotional gimmicks. At Lorain County Community College, in publicizing our "Halloween Extravaganza", the Program Board students will be attending their classes in Halloween costumes in order to stimulate discussion and promote the event.

In conclusion, the combination of effective publicity and promotional programming can work to solve the ever existing dilemma of evening student involvement, attendance and interest in college programs and activities.